

People and Wolves in Washington: Stakeholder Conflict Assessment and Recommendations for Conflict Transformation

By Francine Madden, Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration (HWCC)

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1. Acknowledgements:

I would like to express my gratitude to the more than ninety stakeholders and decision-makers who generously gave their time and open, thoughtful reflection when sharing their perspectives and concerns about this conflict with me as a third party neutral (TPN) in January- March 2015. I present this collection of your/their perspectives and concerns, as well as a set of recommendations, to all of you and those within your community with great respect and care.

Part 5 (p. 9) through Part 11 (p. 33) of this document report the views, opinions and concerns of those interviewed only. I have tried to ensure that these sections are true to the genuine voices, concerns and perspectives of the stakeholders, but in a way that does not inadvertently intensify the conflict. To that end, after the interview phase I sought to ensure that the report was accurate, respectful and validating by reaching out to interviewed stakeholders from each group to discuss elements of the draft. In these conversations, I sensed great concern about the depth of the conflict, but also feelings of positive resolve, and even hints of optimism, about what it could mean to really hear one another, to understand every side's reality, and establish a starting place to come together and work through the many challenges in this conflict.

2. Scope and Methodology:

In late 2014, the Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration (HWCC) was requested by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to assess the conflict over wolves in the State of Washington. HWCC's involvement in a conflict is contingent upon three conditions, which WDFW agreed to. One, information received or created during the course of the assessment is held in trust by HWCC in order to protect sensitive or confidential information provided by the stakeholders. At the same time, non-confidential, non-proprietary and unattributed information, like that contained in this assessment report, is to be shared transparently and equitably among all individuals and groups involved or concerned. Two, HWCC is responsible and accountable to all the stakeholders in the conflict, regardless of who contracts HWCC. Three, beyond the conflict assessment, HWCC will not proceed with multi-stakeholder engagement unless all stakeholder groups support HWCC engagement as a third party neutral (TPN).

Over the course of almost three months (January-March, 2015), the TPN interviewed over 90 individuals representing all major stakeholders and decision-makers concerned with wolves in Washington. This included two intensive weeks meeting in person with nearly 80 individuals across Washington State. Most interviews occurred over a single 2-4 hour period, typically in one-on-one sessions. That said, the TPN also interviewed many members from all groups multiple times over this time period to learn about ongoing changes and developments, garner new information and ensure that she had a clear understanding of the information that was provided and that her understanding accurately reflected their perspectives and concerns. The time spent in interviews with stakeholders amounted to over 350 hours.

After the assessment was written in draft form, multiple members of each group were asked to review key elements of the document to ensure that what was written about their group accurately reflected their group's views and values, was suitable for broad dissemination, and protected anonymity and confidentiality where needed.

The final list of stakeholders interviewed includes a category of "anonymous" that includes those stakeholders who wanted their views taken into account but preferred not to be named.

To develop the list of individuals involved in this assessment, multiple members of each stakeholder group (and sub-group) were asked to suggest names of other members of their group (or sub-group) and obtain permission from them to be included. The TPN routinely asked interviewees if they would like to suggest names of individuals who both held their views and who held different views, who were more or less vocal or involved in the conflict. The goal was to ensure that every group, and multiple sub-groups within each group, was able to contribute to the development of the interviewee list to ensure that the final report included a rich and diverse set of perspectives within and across all groups through this

assessment. As a result, the complete list of stakeholders (Section 12) was co-created with the stakeholders involved in this assessment. (A few individuals were self-selected after hearing about the assessment and expressing an interest in being part of it.) If there are gaps in representation, these gaps can be filled if and as next steps are taken to facilitate transformation of this multi-stakeholder conflict in Washington.

It is important to note that the process of assessing conflict naturally draws out individuals who are most impacted and distressed by the conflict. Consistent with this, the assessment represents voices that may not represent the general public in Washington State, or possibly some sub-groups within stakeholder groups, but it gives the reader a sense of what the conflict looks like at its epicenter.

This conflict assessment relays different group's perspectives of the conflict given their unique experience with the conflict as it has unfolded. This assessment is also an examination of conflict through a "conflict transformation" lens examining the whole picture of what is impacting conflict at multiple levels for each group, as they see it. These levels include:

- disputes – or the current, tangible issues being contested;
- underlying conflict – or the history of unresolved disputes directly or indirectly related to this conflict; and
- identity conflict – or the conflict that results from a perceived threat to one's way of life, significant values and sense of self or group in relation to the outside world.

The conflict assessment seeks to understand this conflict according to how it impacted the full suite of human needs: security (including physical, economic, social, emotional, spiritual, cultural); respect and recognition; belonging and connectedness; meaning in terms of context or place; freedom and autonomy; meaningful participation, voice and control. This conflict was also assessed at the individual and relational level, as well as at a multi-stakeholder, structural and systemic level.

3. Assessment Limitations:

This conflict assessment provides a snapshot of the conflict as of the present moment, with a backward review of the history of conflict to date. As such, it cannot convey all the dynamic potential of the system going forward. Conflict is dynamic and continually evolving, just as are individuals and groups of people.

Perspectives often varied between individuals within each group, as well as between groups. The report seeks to capture the diversity of perspectives, concerns and desires throughout this process. As such, it may be that the reader will occasionally be surprised to find opinions both within their own group and/or within another group that diverge from what might be expected. As much as possible, I have tried to qualify the relative prevalence of a given perspective of the conflict. That said, while every effort was made to avoid any inappropriate misrepresentations of the conflict, I sincerely apologize if any exist in this document or in my understanding of the current conflict.

Despite the extensive and diverse list of stakeholders involved in this assessment, it is important to recognize that this is only a partial assessment of involved stakeholders because there are still voices that were not captured. Even among those perspectives that were captured, there are likely to be gaps in terms of the breadth and depth of what could be covered in this document, if only because it would be impossible for someone to share everything about their perspectives and experience of a complex conflict in a single interview (or even in multiple interviews).

4. Categories of Stakeholder Groups

Those interviewed are grouped into the categories of environmentalists, hunters, livestock producers, WDFW and Others. These groupings were based on both self-identification and categories that members of each group felt were appropriate.

Their perspectives are captured below, in alphabetical order by group, except for “Others” which is listed last in this section.

The term environmentalists describes those individuals and groups advocating for wolf recovery as their primary objective in this conflict. The term “conservationist” can be applied to many members of all groups. The term wolf-advocates is not used because there are hunters, livestock producers and WDFW employees who either want to see wolf recovery succeed and/or believe that wolves have as much right to the land as they do and/or are advocating for coexistence within their groups. And there are environmentalists who advocate for people as well as wolves.

As an institution, WDFW contains as much diversity of perspectives and background as there is across the state of Washington, although not necessarily in the same proportions. The same can be said for other groups as well, in particular the hunting community whose in-group diversity of perspectives is very high. Indeed, there are also environmentalists who are hunters and from ranching families. And there are livestock producers who are hunters and hunters who are livestock producers.

The “other” category is not meant in any way to undermine the validity or value of these individuals’ perspectives. Rather this catchall category was created because the TPN was mostly only able to interview one or a few members of each group within this category and did not want to incline her or the reader toward a generalization of their group based on the opinions of just one or a few members of the group. Also, including these individuals in a larger category is intended to help ensure a level of confidentiality and anonymity for the individuals involved while ensuring that meaningful viewpoints are communicated. Finally, many individuals who fit into the “other” category also leaned toward one of the other categories, so in multiple cases, at least some of their views were captured in the sections for other named stakeholder groups.

There is often a sense that members of a certain group think, feel and act the same way. In reality, diversity (and conflict) within a group can be comparable to the diversity (and conflict) between groups. This reality can be overlooked when generalized categories are created to describe a general group. To illustrate the hazards associated with creating generalized categories, and explain just some of the great diversity of perspectives that exist within and between groups, the following examples are provided. These examples are not intended to convey that generalizations are not sometimes applicable, but rather that assumptions often do not apply to an entire group. For instance, the only person interviewed who mentioned that seeing a wolf was akin to a personal religious experience was a

hunter who did not self-identify as a wolf advocate. The staff of multiple federal government agencies recognizes the need for Northeast livestock producers to have more support and more flexibility in addressing wolf conflict. No livestock producers expressed views that aligned with the fear by some environmentalists that livestock producers had zero tolerance or zero acceptance of having any wolves on the landscape. Many livestock producers interviewed seemed to accept that wolves were here to stay and were open to working within that reality (or already are), even if change was uncomfortable. Some environmentalists supported or were neutral about recreationally hunting wolves post-delisting. Several livestock producers and hunters expressed frustration with the extreme anti-wolf propaganda and several environmentalists expressed frustration with their sides' over-reliance on legal action and the use of social media, which inflames the conflict. Members of every group expressed concern about actions by members of their own group that unnecessarily polarized and intensified the conflict.

One of the ranching families who is perceived to be among the most uncooperative with government and environmental agendas was described by a government employee as being one of the most conscientious and proactive stewards of federal grazing allotments, anticipating potential impacts by their cattle and voluntarily pulling cattle off a grazing allotment much earlier than planned when they became concerned that the cattle might negatively impact the ecosystem. An environmentalist talked about their community's valued tradition of driving east to purchase food from the farmers and livestock producers who they recognize and appreciate for their provision of food for the west side. A livestock producer who has never entered an agreement with WDFW or environmentalists thought it was appropriate and desirable to adapt their practices to prevent conflict with wolves, something they didn't think was out of sync with that natural progression of ranching.

5. The State of Conflict in Washington

Participants were asked to evaluate the state of the conflict prior to the arrival of the third party neutral (TPN) and prior to the conflict assessment process, that is, without taking account of the involvement of the TPN. In general, stakeholders involved in or close to the conflict assessed the conflict as being intense or very intense, and either polarized or very polarized. Most people interviewed across all groups felt the conflict has gotten worse in the recent past, with many noting that it has gotten much worse. Many felt that the conflict worsened significantly after and as a result of significant depredation events, such as with the Wedge pack and Huckleberry pack incidents. But many people noted that the conflict has gotten worse more generally over time. It was widely felt that multi-stakeholder resilience, or the capacity of a group to recover from difficulties, was extremely low, resulting in a break-down of decision-making processes and progress, fracturing of relationships, including increased dehumanization of individuals/groups, and significant deepening of distrust.

The most strongly held concerns about current decision-making processes are that they are not sufficiently trusted and that they do not build sufficient respect and trust among stakeholders. The vast majority of stakeholders, but not all, held these views. Distrust with WDFW was expressed most strongly, especially among livestock producers, environmentalists, and others. These concerns are followed by a perceived lack of fairness and effectiveness in existing processes and a limited or lack of willingness to take a risk to work across divisions while levels of distrust are high. Again, these views were held by most, but not all. Additionally, many involved in the conflict are concerned that current processes do not offer sufficient opportunities for creative, collaborative problem-solving (though some thought they had the unrealized potential to do so). Many people expressed some degree of hopelessness that the process could help them agree upon a decision that is mutually acceptable to all, though several felt this was possible. (The degree of hopelessness and negativity shifted throughout many discussions and depended on whether they thought the past was an indication of the future or whether change was afoot, such that future efforts would be markedly different and improved.) Many people across all groups feel that the only hope for coexistence lies in significant changes occurring that will address their individual or groups main concerns (see below).

Those interviewed either explicitly stated or indirectly conveyed a widespread phenomenon of dehumanization of individuals and groups by members of their own group or another group.

Many people across all groups feel the conflict could or will worsen or continue unabated in the future, in particular because of the nature of activism and polarization in Washington, but also as wolf populations increase in the state. The notable exception to this is that a few individuals (particularly working in government) who have a history of experience in either other wildlife

recovery/natural resource issues or with that of wolf recovery in other states feel that the conflict will naturally dissipate and conditions will improve over time as people adjust to changed circumstances (10 years was a typically expressed timeframe). (Other government officials working in Washington disagreed with this supposition.)

Many of those interviewed noted that the intensity and polarization of the conflict is largely among those actively involved in or impacted by wolf recovery, but that the majority of the population was only mildly interested and involved and therefore the perspective is that this conflict is less intense and polarized for the majority of citizens in Washington at this time. Most people noted that the wolf conflict was far more intense and polarized in general than other wildlife or other natural resource conflicts going on currently or in the past. It was largely felt that wolf conflict was unique and particularly intractable because of the social, emotional, cultural, historical, and other conditions that create the conflict. Many noted that the wolf conflict is a lightning rod for exacerbating other natural resource, fish or wildlife-related issues, as well as for other social, economic, and cultural conflicts. The conflict over wolves is felt or seen as “the straw that broke the camel’s back” or a symbol to rally around to protest current political conditions in the state (and country) and/or because of a long history of unsatisfactorily resolved issues involving environmental, social, cultural and economic disputes. The wolf conflict is also perceived as being responsible for negatively changing (or negatively reinforcing) perspectives of groups or relationships between groups (including urban/rural and west/east), and for low morale and higher stress overall.

For many involved in the conflict, the conflict over wolves has resulted in members of one group either refusing to speak with or only engaging negatively and confrontationally with members of another group or, in some cases, with members of their own group. Some members of all groups have received threats (including death threats) targeting their personhood, their family, their group, or the animals they seek to safeguard.

All groups reported that the conflict over wolves in Washington posed a threat to their sense of control over things that are important to them, such as their identity, significant values or way of life; caused fear or anxiety; and threatened their economic security.

Identity conflict – or a threat to one’s way of life - was a significant source of stress, threat and concern. There was a consistent feeling that the values and way of life stakeholders hold most dear are being threatened by the conflict over wolves. All groups perceived a lack of respect, trust and recognition, especially between groups, and particularly with reference to WDFW, and perceived this as a significant inhibitor to progress. A sense of belonging and connectedness, and its importance, was most strongly expressed within livestock producers and within environmentalists. Hunters also had a sense of belonging among hunters generally, but it was less strongly articulated, especially across sub-groups.

Some individuals from all stakeholder groups perceived, assumed or feared multiple instances of conspiracies, corruption, illegal activities, and hidden agendas by either another group or by members of their own group. Current decision-making processes around wolves were widely considered broken, unfair, or unproductive, though some felt the processes were largely okay, but either just had unfulfilled potential or were hindered because of the polarization of conflict. Most expressed a hope or desire that these processes would or could change for the better, while others expressed doubt that real change was possible.

Members of all groups referred to some scientific research to support their beliefs and goals and questioned the validity of research that did not support their beliefs or was perceived to be “owned” or supported by the other side. Overall, each group relies on, trusts and promotes different sources of scientific research and is often suspicious of research supported by non-neutral or other groups. Each group also felt that the other groups, as well as academic institutions or their researchers, exaggerated or inappropriately extrapolated upon their findings in news and social media or in public venues. Any perceived overstatement of findings fueled opposition rejection.

There is a feeling that each side exaggerates their reality to fit their agenda or goals and there is concern that there is no shared truth. There’s a concern by all sides that when false information is asserted or misleading conclusions drawn, the side that benefits from the false or misleading information doesn’t attempt to correct the resulting misimpressions. This occurs with scientific research, reports of depredations, impacts and benefits of nonlethal measures and lethal control, representation of stakeholders, etc. This is perceived to hurt the credibility of the group who is allowing, promoting or otherwise perpetuating exaggerated or false information and, in turn, perpetuates the cycle of conflict because if one side exaggerates or allows false information, then the other side feels compelled or that it is permissible for them to do so, and the cycle continues.

Throughout the assessment livestock producers, hunters and environmentalists all expressed frustration that WDFW is not following the wolf plan and that if they did, there’d be less conflict and fewer problems. These stakeholders also expressed dissatisfaction with the wolf plan as a result of compromises their group had to make, but they felt that things have deteriorated to such an extent in Washington that if WDFW could just follow the wolf plan, at least things wouldn’t be as bad as they are now. The greatest points of divergence in the wolf plan noted among all sides seems to center around at least two items. First, there is concern about what the limits/realities/needs of non-lethal control are and when is it acceptable to enact lethal control and to what extent. That said, there is widespread acceptance of and willingness to use both nonlethal and lethal control as tools to mitigate conflict with wolves. Second, there is a wide gap in perception between groups about what levels wolves will be managed at and how this compares to delisting numbers. Some view the delisting numbers and conditions (15 breeding pairs spread across the 3

regions) as merely a minimum requirement for delisting but that wolves will and should actually be managed or conserved at some number well above that delisting level. Others view the delisting numbers and conditions as a close approximation of what management will look like post-delisting, meaning the numbers will be managed nearer to the delisting numbers.

The deep-rooted social conflict between diverse people and groups is being passed on to the next generation. For instance, youths have posted death threats to other youths in the context of the wolf conflict through social media.

6. Washington State within the larger society

Washington State exists within a larger geographic, social and political system, in which historical and current conflicts around wolves shape perspectives of and positions on recovery and conflict in Washington.

With few exceptions, most of the stakeholders across all groups felt that the conflict over wolves in Washington is unique compared to the conflict in other states, in part because of the political and geographic divide in Washington, as well as because of the aftermath of sentiment around historical events of wolf recovery, management and conflict in other states and Canada.

Today, many livestock producers and hunters in WA look at the management and hunting practices in Idaho, Wyoming and Montana (and to some degree Canada) and see an approach that simply needs to be replicated in Washington. Meanwhile, many environmentalists look at these same examples and see a cautionary tale, a warning of what not to do, and resolve to ensure that things are done differently in Washington.

Compared to Oregon, which has a similar political and geographic divide, some feel that the political left is stronger and more active in WA by comparison. Further, Washington's recovery goals are broadly perceived to be more ambitious than Oregon's. These factors lead to feelings of greater hope and determination for wolf recovery by some and greater feelings of resentment and oppression by others. Compounding the conflict, Washington has had two very significant depredation events that led to lethal control in three years, while Oregon had less extensive depredation incidents during the initial stage of recovery. Also, there are perceived differences in how the respective fish and wildlife agencies in Oregon and Washington have handled wolf recovery, which has impacted the relative escalation of the conflict.

Others noted that the conflicts in Oregon, Northern Rockies and the Midwest, have not actually resolved. Even after 20 years or more of wolf presence, the social, legal, media and political conflict remains deeply entrenched and most stakeholders remain dissatisfied with the status quo. Some have noted that the explosion of media and social turbulence at how major conflict events unfolded (such as Wedge Pack and Huckleberry Pack incidents) is much higher in Washington than other states at present because wolves are new to Washington and/or because of polarized activism and/or because of how these events were handled.

There is currently growing opposition among environmentalists regionally and nationally in reaction to how wolf management and other predator/ecosystem issues are being handled in the Northern Rockies and elsewhere. Meanwhile, the conditions in Washington are also influenced by other regional and national efforts advocating for humane predator management, restructuring of state fish and wildlife management agencies, increased hunting opportunities or increased

restrictions, gun rights, changes in public grazing on federal land use policy, climate change policy, or the degree of state or federal government control, as well as the policies and practices of industry (extractive industries and utilities) concerning land/water management.

7. Who has a stake in the conflict over wolves in Washington?

Each group perceived significant risk to themselves and their group and felt they had a significant stake in decisions pertaining to the existence of wolves in Washington. That said, their perspective of other's risk or stake in the conflict varied significantly, especially among livestock producers.

Livestock producers felt other groups had little at stake and experienced little risk because they weren't going to lose their way of life, wolves weren't going to change their daily lives in any significant way, and/or because they were either paid to deal with the conflict or made money as a result of the conflict. Many livestock producers also felt that since they perceived that the majority of the environmentalists lived on the west side where there are no wolves currently, they had little at stake. Livestock producers also felt that WDFW has little at stake since they are being paid to deal with wolf recovery and the conflict. Hunters were seen by livestock producers (and by some hunters) as not having as much at stake as livestock producers, especially during the recovery phase, but that wolves would impact ungulate populations and that was a risk for hunters.

All stakeholders recognize that livestock producers have a lot at stake in this conflict.

Environmentalists felt they had a significant stake in this conflict, but largely felt that the other groups did not acknowledge their stake in this conflict. Environmentalists feel they are fulfilling a state- and national-wide majority mandate and desire to have wolves in Washington. They also perceive that they have a high stake in this issue because of their values around ensuring high-functioning ecosystems and a perceived need to counter cultural myths and behaviors that malign wolves.

At the root of this conflict is an acute perceived threat to each group that their identity or way of life is under threat. Each group feels one or more other groups are responsible for that direct threat to identity, which fuels intense reactions. Many environmentalists, livestock producers and hunters connect the wolf (its survival or demise) symbolically to their fight to preserve their way of life.

Many felt that too many resources were already being allocated to wolves, whether this was for their recovery, to deal with the conflict or to enact lethal control after depredations. Sentiments around resource provision/allocation (largely, taxes or food production) fueled a sense of who had of a greater right to feel a larger stake in this conflict and many others.

There is considerable tension between where the conflict needs to be resolved and by whom and where the pressure is coming from and by whom. National (or regional) level environmental, gun rights, and hunting groups, who attempt to influence the outcome of the conflict, are seen by the opposing side as holding

undue and inappropriate influence in a conflict that should not involve groups outside the state because they do not have as much of a stake in the conflict. Not surprising, there is much less criticism (though there is some) for the national/regional groups who hold similar values and goals to local groups/communities. Internal to the state, there is a conflict about whether the west side or urban communities have a stake in the conflict and whether they should be allowed to impose solutions and restrictions on the east side or within rural communities. Meanwhile, urban and/or west side communities generally feel that wolves are a resource held in the public trust in the State of Washington and that as citizens of the state they have a right and responsibility to be involved in decisions impacting this resource.

8. Perspectives of the conflict over wolves by group

The following 5 sections, titled Environmentalists, Livestock Producers, Hunters, WDFW and Other Stakeholders, represent the general perspectives of the conflict as experienced and expressed by numerous members of each stakeholder group among those interviewed. These perspectives include the individuals/groups experience with the conflict and the feelings that result from their experience. These perspectives represent the views of some or many of the stakeholders interviewed, not the views of the TPN.

a. Environmentalists:

Environmentalists see themselves as advocates for the recovery of wolves, among other species, and for the recovery of intact ecosystems. Many voiced respect for hunters and livestock producers who also respect wildlife, nature and a conservation ethic. They similarly voiced respect for the hard work of WDFW and livestock producers. Environmentalists are generally sympathetic to livestock producers and the impact of wolf depredation on livestock. Many expressed support for ethical hunters who they view as honorable for hunting their meat, rather than getting it from the grocery store. Environmentalists shared several accounts of positive feelings toward WDFW staff and those in the livestock producer and hunting community.

Environmentalists perceive that WDFW and livestock producers are more reactive, rather than proactive and are putting lethal control ahead of nonlethal measures during the recovery phase. Environmentalists are concerned that livestock producers are generally resistant to making changes in their ranching practices that are necessary to coexist with wolves over the long term. Some perceive that this resistance has more to do with poor relationships between livestock producers and WDFW.

Environmentalists generally concede that lethal control should be in the toolbox, but not before nonlethal measures are better incorporated or more genuinely attempted as a preventative measure. There is a feeling that livestock producers are discounting the value of non-lethal measures before they give it a solid effort, though they recognize there are limits to nonlethal measures and do not feel these measures are infallible. There is also a sense that WDFW is enabling lax conditions and not following their own rules by falsely asserting that livestock producers are complying with nonlethal requirements simply as a means to hasten the use of lethal control.

This perspective that WDFW is more responsive to a small vocal group of livestock producers, as well as to the hunting community, than to environmentalists and their constituents was seeded historically by the decision to move wolves in early 2012 into the game division when they were still listed as an endangered species. This perspective has been reinforced by subsequent efforts to include wolves in the game

management plan, as well as from staff comments that feel like an effort to pre-empt public processes on post-delisting decisions (such as for recreational hunting) that are outlined in the wolf plan.

The overall sense among many environmentalists interviewed is that there is a rush to push wolves out of their “endangered” status before they are recovered and a lack of adherence to the wolf plan. This perspective reduces the environmentalists’ willingness to “give” when it comes to lethal control because they do not trust that WDFW is a genuine advocate for wolf recovery (and the wolf plan), and feel they need to step up their game to fill that advocacy role. Compounding this impression is a perspective that WDFW is inadequately harnessing the experience of other individuals and groups outside of WDFW that would be valuable for assessing wolf locations and preventing depredations. There is also a feeling by many environmentalists that there is a rush to post-recovery planning when recovery hasn’t been given full attention it needs.

Environmentalists are also concerned by a perspective that WDFW, because they are partially funded by hunting and fishing licenses, is more likely to favor hunters who provide funding directly to their Department (and the ranching community who own private land that hunters utilize).

Some environmentalists are concerned about the media and messaging around the fear of wolves, that people will be hurt or killed by wolves, when the statistics around human injury and death related to wolves in the US is extremely low. These individuals are concerned that WDFW isn’t ensuring that accurate information around wolves is being disseminated broadly. Many are concerned that fears and assertions that ungulate populations are being devastated is incorrect and over-exaggerated.

Underlying these issues is a sense of distrust and frustration with WDFW. Many environmentalists expressed concern that WDFW has been deceptive, has hidden agendas, behaves inconsistently, and lacks transparency. There is also a general lack of clarity about how WDFW’s internal structure works and a sense that current internal dynamics and structure, including and especially between Olympia and the region/field, doesn’t function effectively to meet the needs of wolf recovery.

Environmentalists are also concerned that a majority of the public in the state would disagree with current practices and would favor more nonlethal rather than lethal measures. Their feeling is that, if rallied, a majority of the public will stand up for wolf recovery and support less lethal action. There is a further feeling that the values of the larger population are no longer in line with WDFW old guard values and current actions. There is a corollary feeling that this divide between the majority public and WDFW is widening and that momentum is building for changes to ensure more humane treatment of animals in general.

Environmentalists feel that their identity and values around nature, balanced ecosystems, wildlife, and their desire for wild places are threatened by this conflict. They feel their values, identities and way of life are not equally respected or held to the same level of importance as the values and identities of other groups.

Many environmentalists feel that many livestock producers are resistant to receiving support, making changes, and exaggerate claims of loss by including unaccounted-for livestock in with confirmed depredations and not differentiating the two. Some environmentalists are offended by the use of anti-wolf symbols, especially in forums where the goal is collaboration. Many environmentalists are frustrated that while livestock producers' assert that they will be economically ruined because of wolf recovery, they nevertheless often reject offers for financial assistance to prevent or compensate livestock depredations.

Some are concerned that while wolves will most likely recover fully in WA, they are a species that provokes strong emotional and political reactions, and as a result, the fight over wolves, including efforts on the environmental side, could undermine the strength of the Endangered Species Act for other species for whom recovery is a much more difficult, slow and uncertain process. Some environmentalists also feel that liberal use of lethal control now (and poaching) will slow the recovery process, which will, in the end, hurt ranching and hunting communities who they recognize are eager to move to a post-delisting phase.

A few environmentalists noted that overgrazing creates conditions for fire (increased invasive vegetation) and promotes low water/stream quality. A few felt that grazing practices simply needed to evolve to match ecological changes, but they also felt that the practice of using grazing allotments could, and even should, continue. A couple environmentalists spoke to the overall ecological benefits (once ecological costs of grazing allotment use were netted out) to having ranches remain in operation since open private land under ranching was more desirable than allowing private ranch land to be turned over to residential development (if other land conservation options are not available). A small minority of environmentalists expressed a desire to see an end to grazing allotments. One environmentalist expressed this desire only as a last alternative if coexistence with wolves could not be achieved under current public land use conditions. A related area of concern is that wolves are killed on public land because of conflict with livestock, and yet those lands and the wolves belong to the public. Some expressed the feeling that range riders could help ensure better grazing practices and would result in healthier, heavier cattle.

Many environmentalists are frustrated by the notion put forth by many livestock producers and hunters that ungulate populations will disappear with wolves. Their perspective is that science and history have demonstrated that wolf populations will have an impact on ungulates, but that there will still be healthy, viable populations of ungulates across the state.

Some felt that the Fish and Wildlife Commission was overly biased toward hunters and livestock producers and that the commission structure in general (and how appointments are made) lacked legitimacy.

b. Hunters:

Many hunters feel they are true conservationists and are proud of their history with the conservation movement. Many hunters are supportive of wolf recovery. They value nature and the outdoors, as well as their understanding of wildlife and natural systems because of the time they spend in nature. Many hunters are sympathetic to ranching communities and the impacts of wolves on them, whether they are part of that community or not. Many hunters rely on and trust science, but from various sources that are more in line with their other identities and values (see below), rather than simply because they are hunters.

Many hunters feel that extreme anti-wolf propaganda should be stopped because it is harmful to their community (and perspectives of their community). Some within this group are concerned that wolves are managed to a level that ensures sufficient ungulate populations to sustain both hunting opportunities and wolves. If length or existence of hunting seasons, hunting licenses, and successful hunting opportunities are not sufficient, the concern is that people will give up (or not start) hunting because the barriers are too high. There is recognition that wolves are not the only variable that impacts hunting opportunities, as disease, other predators, hard winters and other factors (see below) also significantly impact hunting opportunities.

The hunting community can not easily be set apart as a distinct group without simultaneously acknowledging that they often also overlap with livestock producers, environmentalists and government, urban and rural dwellers, people living in both the east and west, and maintain liberal and conservative political views. Despite this, there is a general sense that their way of life is under threat by multiple developments and conditions, though reasons for this vary. Reasons include one or more of the following: the new generation of WDFW staff whose views are seen to align more with environmentalist agendas, rather than that of hunters; increased restrictions and regulations regarding hunting practices and increased exclusion from traditional hunting areas; increased urbanization that causes a loss of traditional hunting areas and a change in the values of a society that is increasingly anti-hunting; and/or that in the media (news and social) hunters are portrayed poorly, as unethical or bad.

Many hunters are concerned about the next generation and fear that if the barriers to hunting are too high, youth will choose other activities and pastimes other than hunting. Many feel there is considerable fracturing within the hunting community based on what it means to hunt or to be a hunter, as well as what is considered ethical in hunting. This latter category includes a range of controversial issues

including: the use of traditional vs. modern equipment; whether one uses/eats the animal that is hunted; whether one hunts prey species or predators; what training and capacity one has to hunt and with what tools and under what conditions; how one communicates about hunting in social media and whether they use graphic images (which are offensive to some in the hunting community); whether one experiences hunting as a right or entitlement over other groups use of the land; whether and how one adheres to scientific management and legal practices; how and whether one mentors the next generation.

Being allowed to hunt wolves is experienced in multiple ways. These may include one or a multiple of the following for different individuals and subgroups: expanding opportunities and satisfaction in hunting; ensuring effective management, including to sustain subsistence lifestyles; not an issue or interest; validation of the right or entitlement to hunt; a “win” over others (the west side, urbanites, environmentalists, anti-hunting populations); a sense of control over a uncertain situation (with respect to impacts on ungulate population and ungulate hunting); or as a personal freedom (if legalized) that is supported by those who have no intention of hunting wolves.

Not being able to hunt wolves is seen in multiple ways as well. These include: as a non-issue; an effort to further erode the dwindling right to hunt; a threat to gun rights; as a threat to the ungulate population upon which many hunters rely; or as yet more evidence that the hunting way of life is threatened.

Some see wolves as a competitor of hunters who already feel their way of life is being threatened and/or who feel that wolves will devastate the ungulate population upon which they depend for food and/or recreation. There is a corollary feeling among these individuals that there are already too many predators on the landscape and adding one more will squeeze out hunters and hunting practices that much more. There is also a feeling among some hunters that the majority of hunters are quietly engaging in their pastime and have little interest in wolves or the wolf conflict, but that the more vocal hunters, perceived as the minority, are the ones expressing the fear that their right to hunt is being eroded and that wolves should be shot on sight.

Some hunters experience distrust in WDFW, for instance with reported populations of wolves and ungulate populations which some feel are falsely fixed to support an environmental agenda. Others feel that WDFW’s scientific methods for counting wildlife are erroneous. Many feel that WDFW is distrusted because of their increasing inclination toward environmentalists, because of law enforcement actions, and/or because WDFW is becoming less hunter-friendly by increasing financial barriers to hunting. There is also a feeling that WDFW is managing wildlife more by social initiative than by science.

c. Livestock producers:

Livestock producers value their way of life, their independence and work ethic, their families and communities and their livestock and land. They feel satisfaction in providing food for other people. They value their knowledge and experience in conserving the land under their care and continually adapting to meet the needs of livestock and land alike. They enjoy recounting times when they spent consecutive days and nights bottle-feeding a calf or lamb by the family fireplace and they convey resolve and pain recalling a difficult time such as when they rescued and rehabilitated an injured cow.

Livestock producers feel that they are often unfairly and inaccurately labeled as “sloppy operators” unless they do what environmentalists want them to do. This is offensive to livestock producers as they feel they have strong values and principles, they work hard, and they have made a success of their business despite many obstacles and many changes (ecology and socially) over the years. For many, ranching goes back generations. Yet, in a short time, they feel that environmentalists have shifted what it means to be “a good livestock producer” based on imposed values, activities and goals.

Many livestock producers feel that what environmentalists expect in terms of nonlethal measures is unrealistic, inapplicable and/or unsustainable, especially for smaller ranches or given the conditions under which they graze livestock. Many feel that nonlethal measures can work to a limited degree but only under certain conditions. Other livestock producers are open to using nonlethal practices, but may be resistant to cooperative agreements, because of previous experiences with WDFW or because of social pressure within their own community (or both). Many feel that each ranching operation is unique and as such, rigid or generalized one-size-fits-all rules do not fit with the individual needs and capacities of each ranching operation. Further, many expressed concern that the efforts they are already making privately to prevent depredations are not recognized simply because environmental groups and the government weren't involved.

Livestock producers feel they are mischaracterized and demonized by other groups and/or in social and news media either because they haven't partnered with environmentalists/government, because the animals they care for end up becoming people's food, because they are perceived as ignorant or uneducated, or because they are perceived as not doing enough for wolves when they didn't ask for them to begin with – and they are incurring all the financial, social and sweat equity costs associated with wolf recovery. Livestock producers are affronted by verbal attacks, as well as physical attacks when people shoot their livestock in retaliation for lethal control or perceived poaching of wolves. Many livestock producers see themselves as conservationists, and perceive the actions of environmentalists more in line with preservation, not conservation.

Livestock producers who oppose entering into cooperative agreements (or accepting compensation) with the government or environmental organizations do so for one or a variety of reasons, including: they don't trust the institution with whom they are asked to make an agreement; information sharing by WDFW is perceived as unfair or biased; they will lose control over their operation or their autonomy; they believe that for them to be upstanding, good operators, they must make it on their own – getting “help” is a sign that you can't do it on your own; there is social pressure not to enter into agreements; signing an agreement is akin to voicing an acceptance of wolves; they are accepting a false assertion that the confirmed depredations (or nonlethal measures) are the total cost of living with wolves, when the real costs are more extensive (see below); the agreements were developed with environmentalists, not with ranchers; they are already taking nonlethal measures on their own (and prefer it that way); and/or they are giving up other rights, including to private property.

The agreements, policy and general discourse around the costs associated with wolves are perceived to leave out other damages and costs including: unconfirmed losses (of which they feel there are many more than confirmed); weight loss and lower pregnancy rates in livestock which are both associated with a skittish or constantly moving herd; increased regulations and operating guidelines on grazing allotments, and other emotional, social and economic costs and inconveniences that add additional work to or stress within their operations. They are also concerned that current cost share agreements are financially unsustainable and they feel that the merits of nonlethal measures are wrongly labeled as a success based on individual experiences, when in reality, they feel that the effort to drive wolves off one property may just push the wolves to a neighbor's ranch, thus relocating the problem. Moreover, while some understand the need for a forensic investigation for confirmed depredations, and they accept that many depredations cannot be confirmed, they express anger and frustration with how WDFW staff handle these (and other) situations, experiencing it as often disrespectful and/or even intentionally deceptive.

Many livestock producers are resistant to WDFW (or environmentalists) because of a history of negative encounters with individuals within these groups, including other branches of WDFW. Many feel that WDFW needs to take more responsibility for monitoring and managing ungulate populations, collaring wolves and sharing information with producers to prevent livestock depredations. In general, the lack of trust, feelings of disrespect, hidden agendas, deception, and mischaracterizations make livestock producers resistant to or skeptical of engagement.

Social pressure (and a fear of losing one's sense of belonging within their community) is another significant source of resistance within communities to engaging with WDFW and environmentalists. Where these have been overcome, it has been because of good interpersonal relationships with those groups, personal motivation, financial need, less inclination to conform to community norms (or an

ability to form an agreement quietly), or an existing history of partnership within their community such that the social barriers to doing so do not appear so high.

Livestock producers are concerned about the next generation turning away from ranching either because the barriers to successful operation are too high (see above), because the work is too hard (includes the above) and other options seem more viable or easier, or because they want to avoid the social conflict in general. Livestock producers also feel unacknowledged and unappreciated as providers of an important food source for non-ranching people, including those on the west side or in urban communities. They feel that environmentalists and WDFW do not understand the realities of ranching. They also feel that the conditions or aspirations of wolf recovery are not in line with limited statewide habitat and high human populations. Many feel that WDFW sides more with environmentalists and west side politics, has deceived them, or not followed through on promises or done so too little too late. Many feel that WDFW actions (influenced by polarized political pressure) are inconsistent. They feel that WDFW employees are not impacted operationally or economically by the wolf conflict and do not appreciate (or share in the burdens of) the costs they face. Many are also reluctant to partner with a government agency that seems to them to be structurally and relationally divided.

Livestock producers feel weary from a long history of environmentalist and government agendas, actions and broken promises. (These include, among other issues: wilderness movements, recreational use restrictions on federal land, threats to use of grazing allotments, regulations and fines imposed by state and federal government, a lack of autonomy on their private property, recovery of other wildlife species and limits to hunting once the species is recovered) This history, coupled with a fear that grazing allotments on federal land will be taken away – either because rules around wolves will ultimately make it economically infeasible to use these allotments or because the wolf recovery is perceived as a direct strategy to stop grazing allotments on federal land – makes livestock producers feel their way of life is under attack and thus they are more entrenched in a position where they are not willing to compromise. There is some sense, especially in the Northeast, that if they give an inch on wolves, the next target will be grazing allotments and then they will lose their way of life.

Livestock producers also feel that they are not recognized as good stewards of the land, both on their own private property and leased land, yet they feel that because of them, there is still open land to support wildlife. Many also noted that grazing cattle has important benefits for fire suppression and ungulate-preferred grasses. Livestock producers are worried about the declining viable land available for grazing, especially due to ecological events and development. Livestock producers are also concerned that they are not seen as caring for their animals and felt it was unfair and incorrect to be grouped with factory farms or other circumstances where animals do not have a good quality of life.

Some livestock producers feel little to no fear of wolves, while some perceive a personal fear of wolves, or a fear for children and the elderly. Where it exists, this fear is greater than with other predators, like cougars, because they perceive that there are more of them (in a pack), they are less fearful of humans, and more destructive. Livestock producers are generally more emotionally troubled by the predation behavior of wolves versus other predators, especially as it relates to how they kill the livestock they've raised and cared for.

Livestock producers value the individualism and diversity among operators. That said, many also see themselves as a community under attack so they are reluctant to deviate from the norms set within their community or may experience high social costs when they do.

Some livestock producers feel left out as an intentional strategy by WDFW to influence a specific outcome, which raises suspicion and distrust toward WDFW. Past interactions, processes and agreements with state and federal government agencies have soured current perceptions of the government.

While the inclination toward nonlethal measures and to working with WDFW and environmentalists is somewhat higher and less fraught with contention in other parts of the state aside from the Northeast, the general sentiments are consistent, as is the concern about WDFW, across the state. Further livestock producers across the state share widespread sympathy for the conflicts Northeast livestock producers are facing.

Some livestock producers feel they would rather be coexisting with wolves, but they feel they are always on the side of lethal control because of how WDFW and environmentalists act. Some acknowledge that there are reasonable environmentalists working toward wolf recovery.

There is also internal conflict between livestock producers over whether they work with WDFW and environmentalists, as well as over how moderately or intensely they react within the community or in news/social media to the presence of wolves or wolf conflict (reactions vary). There are also conflicts between livestock producer associations regarding perception of relative accuracy, authenticity or effectiveness in representing livestock producers to WDFW and within the larger community.

d. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW):

WDFW staff express commitment to their mission and to meeting the diverse needs of wildlife, fish and the people who value and use these resources. WDFW staff feel committed to solving problems, to finding a path forward, and to working toward shared solutions, even when they feel under attack. They feel they strive to be sensitive to needs and struggles of diverse stakeholders and are open to exploring new ideas.

WDFW feels that one of the biggest challenges with wolves is overcoming the polarization and complexity of social conflict among stakeholders, finding common ground and mutually agreeable solutions. The social conflict is perceived to be more challenging than other aspects of wolf recovery. Many recognize that the lack of trust and credibility are central issues. WDFW finds trust-building especially difficult in a highly polarized environment. There is a feeling that each side looks at same set of circumstances and interprets them differently, causing a lack of trust. That said, there is recognition that WDFW staff's education and training is largely focused on wildlife, not people. As such, some WDFW staff feels they lack capacity to engage effectively with diverse stakeholders in conflict.

Some WDFW staff are concerned about the relatively small size of the state in terms of limited habitat for wolves, especially given the population of people and their competing needs and uses of the land. Some are concerned that the controversy around wolves will impact public acceptance and tolerance not just for wolves, but other critical species as well, now and in the future. There is concern with the challenges of legally listed species for private property owners.

Another challenge is the ability of each stakeholder group to be objective about science, especially when the results do not reinforce the group's beliefs or desires. Additionally, there are concerns that as science evolves and new research demonstrates a need for changes in plans or management, there will be stakeholder resistance on one side or the other.

There is concern that wolves are often a scapegoat for other social, economic, and political concerns and realities or that issues with wolf recovery are more volatile because they are the most recent incident/development in a long line of cumulative events that have created current conditions which are viewed by each group as untenable. There is concern that wolves are economically advantageous to some groups and politically advantageous to some in political elections. There is a feeling in WDFW that despite their efforts at balancing needs and concerns, the polarization of conflict in Washington results in perspectives of favoritism toward one group or another by the Department.

The wolf conflict is also eroding WDFW's ability to address other fish and wildlife recovery and management priorities where they feel there is greater biological and scientific urgency and need. Some expressed concern that the wolf conflict causes political leadership within the state to react negatively toward WDFW on other matters, such as budget issues.

There is also concern that political influence from outside the state, including the potential for legal action, maintains a cycle of active conflict and disinclination toward finding shared solutions. Some are concerned that wildlife should be managed by science and by the professionals in WDFW, not by a ballot initiative. Further, ballot initiatives have historically limited options for hunters to physically

assist in focused wildlife management efforts. Future legal action to limit post-delisting management options (especially by hunters) would also result in a reduction of revenue for WDFW.

There is further concern that stakeholder groups have unrealistic expectations about the feasibility of wildlife management for trapping wolves for radio collaring or accurately counting breeding pairs (as opposed to packs, which are easier to discern). There are also concerns that WDFW's approach to wolf recovery needs to respond to realities as experienced, as opposed to what was anticipated in the wolf plan. Some feel that recovery standards are too rigid or prescriptive because they were more influenced by a negotiated agreement, rather than science. WDFW is concerned that the wolf plan leaves room for interpretation by each stakeholder group, such that when an action by the Department is taken (or not taken) it is seen as not adhering to the wolf plan by one group or the other (or all). That said, many in WDFW are concerned that some ranching and hunting stakeholders are reluctant to adapt their expectations and practices now that wolves are on the landscape and given the political realities of the state.

There is some concern internal to WDFW (that is reflected extensively by external stakeholders) that effective, inclusive coordination and decision-making, innovation, communication, mutual learning, trust and empowerment within WDFW is lacking. There is a feeling that headquarters and field staff are often divided, in terms of power, political pressure, opportunities and obstacles, and these make the policy-implementation connection challenging. Additionally, some WDFW staff commented about the challenges internally with the wolf recovery and conflict specialist programs. Some have remarked that WDFW lacks innovation and coordination in communication with the public, as well as internally. Some have remarked on the overall low morale and high stress within WDFW. At least some of this stress comes from the hurtful remarks people make about them because of their institutional affiliation.

e. Other stakeholders

Some stakeholders do not fit exclusively, easily or at all into one of the above categories, yet many share the perspectives and views of one or more groups above. Some additional perspectives and those that were emphasized in this group are shared below.

Despite the diversity of individuals within this category, they all expressed a desire for positive progress and partnerships and expressed sensitivity to the issues, needs, and concerns among groups and individuals involved in this conflict.

It was noted that regions, communities and counties within the state have unique cultures and identities, which influences responses to the wolf conflict. These cannot

be simply or roughly differentiated according to just east/west or urban/rural or pro-/anti-wolf.

Some stakeholders feel that the emotions on all sides of the wolf issue are running so high that neither side can really hear the other side. This applies, as well, to hearing the science. There is a feeling that the emotions need to be dealt with first, before attempting to develop science-based policy or management decisions. That said, some feel that while science can give you a lot of information, there is recognition that this is a dynamic system and full information is and will continue to be lacking.

Some felt that much of WDFW's engagement with other groups reflects a lack of investment in and awareness of group individuality, culture, structure, and function. There is a feeling that WDFW has not made genuine efforts toward creating effective, trusting partnerships, which includes asking groups/individuals what that could mean. Many feel this has been especially harmful since WDFW lacks internal experience and skill to adequately address wolf recovery. There is a feeling that past communications and actions and a lack of standards of practice across the department have resulted in significant mistrust and a lack of stakeholder confidence in the Department overall.

Some feel that the inconsistent, contradictory messages coming from WDFW (that vary depending on who they are talking to) eventually catch up with them because someone always hears both messages. This fuels distrust. Some feel that stakeholders don't always have the facts, but they all have opinions.

Many perceive wolves to be a trigger point for a broad array of other issues. Wildlife and other natural resources issues are related and how one is handled bleeds over to other issues. There is a sense that everyone is simultaneously fighting the last fight and the next fight. There is a sense that if either side takes a hard stance on wolves, jeopardizing one side or the other, public opinion might go other way. There is concern that this lack of willingness to meet halfway by one group will result in the lack of fulfillment of that group's other interests, needs and goals because of how the wolf conflict is handled. Overall, there is a feeling that the extremes on both sides, using legal, illegal, political or other tactics, will not be effective in the long run and will inhibit progress and create complications in the short term. By contrast, many individuals also feel that wolf recovery will be successful regardless, while some also note that livestock producers in Canada, who have lived their whole life with wolves, haven't gone out of business.

Many question the purported smooth success and blanket applicability of examples like the Blackfoot Challenge and Wood River Project. They feel these examples are over-emphasized by environmentalists without simultaneously acknowledging the challenges, obstacles, histories, differences and limitations of these projects. A similar over-emphasis by environmentalists and WDFW (without acknowledging

the unintended, negative consequences) occurs with livestock producer partnerships.

Some stakeholders are concerned that the conflict over wolves negatively impacts other wildlife. And there is a sense of frustration that WDFW will manage predators for livestock but not a highly endangered ungulate, such as woodland caribou.

There is a feeling that the threat of legal/illegal or political action removes receptivity of those at the table to make decisions because there is a sense that unless one side or the other gets everything they want, they will use these actions to nullify progress. This undermines the ability of people at the table to come to shared decisions, or even be willing to discuss shared decisions.

There is a sense from within this group that despite some groups' concerns or ambitions, there is little political will or mandate to remove grazing allotments. There is a sense that grazing practices have evolved to be less harmful to the environment, and while it is felt that the benefits of grazing for fire suppression and wild ungulates are over-stated and often inapplicable, so is the damage done.

There is a sense that people and groups involved in the wolf conflict unite around their position on or feelings toward wolves. Reactionary words or actions by one group produce reactionary words or actions by the other group and this cycle further polarizes the conflict, emphasizes and supports the extremes and leaves little opportunity for coming together around wolves. Social and news media greatly exacerbate the conflict for all sides.

There is a sense that people draw conclusions, insist on actions or make accusations without listening or fully understanding the reality on the ground. There is a sense that livestock producers will evolve similar to how Idaho livestock producers have, where they use range riders as a matter of standard practice, particularly in large herds. There is also a sense that Idaho producers accept losses due to wolves as a part of business and Washington producers need to move in that direction. Along the same lines, there is a sense that if livestock producers are given more control, there will be less animosity and entrenched conflict.

9. Perspectives of the Wolf Advisory Group (WAG)

Members of WAG felt the forum provided an opportunity to hear each other's views and personalize interactions with individuals from different stakeholder groups. In general, participants of WAG felt positive about fellow WAG members but did not feel there were "real" relationships on WAG or that the positive feelings were deep or lasting on any side. To that end, many felt that any personal goodwill felt or shared in one-on-one interactions did not translate to effective group cohesion, support or decision-making, or to genuine relationships or support outside of WAG or to individuals or groups once they were no longer at a WAG meeting. In general, WAG has not felt like a cohesive or resilient group. It does not appear that the existence of WAG has improved relationships with WDFW personnel. Stakeholder groups report having circumvented WAG and gone directly to WDFW or others as a means to express concerns and motivate action because they have not felt enough trust or safety in WAG to express those concerns. Some expressed concern that this undermines the value of WAG.

All previous WAG members reapplied to be on WAG for 2015-2016 either because they were willing to give it one more chance or because they wanted to ensure their views were heard, and/or because they felt there was still hope in working things out if the process for decision-making/advice-giving were to change. New WAG members, especially those with little or no connection to the previous WAG process, were largely more optimistic. Non-WAG members with some exposure to WAG (because they had observed as a member of the public or heard about WAG) largely felt disappointed, frustrated by or distrustful of the process and commented on the lack of fairness and constructive dialogue and palpable distrust in the room.

WAG as a decision-making (or advice-making) body was largely seen as ineffective or broken by both many members of WAG and many who were familiar with WAG, though a couple individuals thought it was either somewhat effective or hindered more by polarization than process problems.

Common sentiments and concerns included:

- Participants, both new and existing members, are motivated to try to work through issues on WAG and work across divisions to reach agreements, though the lack of genuine relationships and general distrust (including with WDFW) inhibited a true willingness to take a risk.
- Most individuals feel some level of inhibition or discomfort in freely expressing views
- Most felt that while they were respectful and heard the other side, the other side was less respectful and failed to fully hear them and their needs/views.
- Many mentioned that a professional facilitator was needed.
- Many felt that shared decisions (or shared advice about decisions) are never reached or not reached to satisfaction, which is a point of frustration for members and others. Instead, individuals feel that WDFW takes the polarized views and lack of consensus and then makes their own decisions after

hearing the disparate opinions of WAG members. They tend to do so without informing WAG how decisions are made.

- Some groups feel their side is not adequately or fairly represented on WAG
- Many feel that WDFW uses WAG either as a cover for their decisions (so they can later say they ran the decision through WAG when WAG never actually agreed on the decision), as an exercise in “ticking off boxes” in the column of “stakeholder engagement” or as mere window dressing for external input into their internal decision-making process.
- Many are frustrated about the advice-providing process and the lack of decision-making authority of WAG. While there were varying opinions on whether WAG should have more decision-making authority, to what extent, or how this would mesh with the legal mandate of WDFW, there was general consensus that the current process felt unsatisfying at best. Some feel that the process has underutilized and under-empowered WAG.
- There was a general sense that there was increased grandstanding and resistance to making agreements more recently.
- There is a general sense that relationship building and trust building are compromised and undermined because of the open-to-public process, though several expressed an appreciation for why these processes were open to the public. Another problem cited regarding the open process was that it held people more in fixed positions; it limited opportunities to take a risk; and it encouraged grandstanding. Opinions varied on the benefits/costs of making the process a closed or partially closed process or how that might be done.
- There is considerable dissatisfaction with the feeling that the WAG did not feel like a cohesive, committed group.
- There is a sense that the extensive distrust in WDFW taints the WAG process and member relationships and thus its ability to function effectively.
- There is general frustration that WDFW does not clearly communicate before, during or after WAG meetings about how WAG should function, how advice is going to be used, whether decisions are final, what the procedures are, how conflicts would be resolved, and what information (materials, agenda) was needed or could be provided in advance of WAG meetings to inform advice/decision-making (and after WAG meetings to update WAG on how the advice was applied). Generally there was a concern about WDFW’s transparency and openness.
- Feelings were mixed, but largely negative, about whether the process was fair, with some sighting the process as unfair and others reporting that it was difficult to tell if it was fair because it didn’t function effectively or constructively and a couple feeling the process was fair but the polarization of the conflict made it difficult to come to any agreement.
- To date, the process has not felt like it offers sufficient opportunities for collaborative, creative problem solving but there is a feeling it should and a hope that it could do this.
- There is a broad sense that there is little or no progress between meetings - discussion points and decisions are revisited time and again with little sense of forward momentum.

- For some, the expansion of WAG members is considered a good thing, while for many others (both those on and off WAG) there is a feeling that an increased group is a recipe for more destructive conflict and less functional ability of this forum to make decisions/provide cohesive advice.
- Overall, stakeholders not in or close to WAG lack knowledge, opinions or perspectives about WAG. For those who have come to the sit in on meetings, there was a general sense that the process was ineffective and individuals exhibited distrust and a lack of willingness to engage in dialogue, especially when someone was perceived to be antagonistic in the meeting.
- There is a lack of shared clarity on how or when or in what capacity WDFW, Commission, governor's office, WDFW director/staff should be involved. Some expressed a desire to have more WAG recognition and support (and possibly regular involvement) by the WDFW Director and Commission. Some found the fluctuating involvement of various WDFW staff disruptive.
- There was widespread interest in having the Director of WDFW provide motivation, support and commitment to WAG, especially at the first meeting of the new WAG.
- While many noted that the forum provided an opportunity for deeper understanding of diverse perspectives, they felt the relationships lacked depth and they desired to have more genuine relationships across divisions.
- The lack of trust in WDFW is felt to impact WAG in that, even if something is agreed upon, there is little confidence in WDFW's competence to implement the advice.
- With few exceptions, there is a general sense that WAG members need to build genuine relationships first, and then move to mutual learning and decision-making. All sides – and most individuals – expressed a need for team building and relationship-building before anything else is addressed. That said, there is a sense of urgency with regard to certain decisions that need to be made (but little collective sense of what those decisions points should be) and a competing sense that these decisions cannot be made under current relationship conditions.
- Some decisions that individual stakeholders felt needed to be made include: improving recovery efforts, developing plans for this season's depredation events, reviewing and revising the depredation flow chart, reviewing the wolf plan, developing a post-delisting wolf management plan.
- WAG members would like a clearer sense of shared goals, purpose, and decision space.

10. The Business of Wolves?

Environmentalists are widely perceived (even by some members of their own group) to benefit financially from the wolf conflict and from amplifying the conflict to the public, their members and donors. Lawsuits are seen as financially rewarding as well (both in terms of increased donations and the eventual recovery of legal fees). There is a feeling that members of the public who may be overwhelmed by the complexity of other environmental issues can more easily be encouraged to give donations 'to stop the slaughter of wolves'. These conditions are perceived to give environmental organizations a vested interest in maintaining the conflict, rather than resolving it. Environmentalists who have chosen to take actions to de-escalate the conflict, to collaborate or find other more peaceable means to address this conflict and/or who resist pressures and opportunities to promote or engage in a "fight" stance have lost members and key donors who perceive their actions as lacking in strength or conviction.

Livestock producers are perceived to benefit financially from highly subsidized federal grazing allotments, with subsidies being paid for by taxpayers. Moreover, there is concern that the low grazing fees are intended to take into account the fact that ranchers will have losses from predators yet compensation is still offered to producers who lose livestock on federal lands.

Livestock producer and hunter member associations and other organizations (including gun rights advocacy groups) with similar membership are also perceived to financially benefit from perpetuating and escalating the conflict and exaggerating the threats of wolves to and within their community. A strong stance against wolves boosts membership, funding and ensures job security, thus these individuals and groups also benefit from remaining in conflict and failing to find resolution. On the other hand, when staff or leaders of these groups make efforts to partner with the other side or seek mutually acceptable solutions among stakeholders, membership drops and jobs or positions are threatened (or lost).

Range riders are also perceived to be financially benefiting from wolves.

WDFW receives significant funding from hunting and fishing licenses, so some perceive that WDFW will do more to protect and promote the needs of this interest group rather than those of interest groups who do not provide a direct contribution of resources to the agency's functioning.

It was also noted that the TPN's organization also benefits financially from the conflict because if the conflict didn't exist, particularly to this level of intensity, HWCC wouldn't be paid to be involved in seeking resolution/transformation of the conflict.

11. Common ground: Shared Perspectives, Concerns and Desires:

Members of all groups expressed pleasure in their conservationist identity and in how their knowledge and practice supports natural resource conservation.

All groups involved felt a sense of belonging and connectedness within their group and expressed distress for the next generation – their children and grandchildren – and those generations' ability to have or engage with nature and the outdoors in ways that align with their culture, lifestyles and customs. The fear of this loss provoked deep sadness and anxiety by all sides.

Many are concerned that a continuation of current conditions may drive (or has already driven) many law-abiding citizens toward illegal actions. There is widespread feeling among environmentalists, hunters, livestock producers, WDFW and others that this is an undesirable consequence of the current conflict, but also a general worry that this may be an inevitable consequence of currently eroding social tolerance and increasing conflict intractability. There is also widespread concern about the inevitability of patterns of conflict in Washington replicating those seen in other states and all sides find elements of this deeply undesirable.

All individuals and groups expressed love and care for animals. Their relationship with and values around these animals may differ, as does the animals that they care for, but the care and love and sense of person-as-protector is strong across all groups.

There is general concern across all groups that their group is being unfairly attacked, dehumanized, and is under threat by the other group(s) or by members of their own group. There is widespread concern that the role of social media and the news media has exacerbated the conflict by fueling dehumanization of people and mischaracterizations of people, groups and events. There is also widespread concern that “the other side” does not understand the reality of their side and there is a desire to be better heard, understood and empathized with. There is strong desire on all sides for the character assassinations to stop.

Every group has members that feel other members of their own group are negatively targeting them and every group has members who feel they have allies and cooperative partners in other groups.

There is widespread concern about the loss of open and natural landscapes so that each side can fulfill its group's goals and needs within the landscape. There is widespread concern that the fracturing of landscapes for residential and commercial development will harm their group's way of life for this generation and the next generations.

There is a widespread sense of a lack of control over the things that are most important to each group, including the ability to reach one's needs, goals and

potential. There is consistent concern about the level of extreme intensity and polarization of the conflict among key stakeholder groups and a desire to reduce that polarization and hostility. At the same time, there is generalized concern that the other side wants to maintain the polarization levels because they feel it is to that group's advantage.

There is cross-group concern that the inflammatory discourse around wolves in Washington – including depredation events, scientific research, and fear-mongering propaganda – is hurtful to all sides.

Most people perceive a lack of trust, especially with WDFW, as one of the biggest problems across all groups. That said, many people across all groups voiced acknowledgement that WDFW has an incredibly difficult job and expressed genuine liking for individual staff members.

Members of all groups expressed personal upset, sadness, anxiety, frustration and anger about the current conflict, yet all groups have many members who are willing to come to the table to figure out how to move forward together. All sides recognized the pressing need for more civility among individuals from all groups. They want increased trust and honest communication. They want to improve current conditions. All sides want to feel heard by both the other groups and by those within their group.

All sides shared a love of their family, their community, and their way of life.

12. List of Participants in the Conflict Assessment

Harriet Allen, retired WDFW
Phil Andersen, retired WDFW
JT Austin, Governor's Office
Cameron Bailey, Legislative Assistant, Senator Pearson
Joe Barker, livestock producer
Brian Blake, Legislative Representative
Bruce Botka, WDFW
Nick Cady, Cascadia Wild
Jason Callahan, Counsel for House Natural Resources Committee
Shawn Cantrell, Defenders of Wildlife
K.D. Chapman-See, Democratic Caucus Policy Lead
Tim and Sue Coleman, Kettle Range Conservation Group
Hilary Cooley, USFWS
Dave and Julie Dashiell, livestock producer
Don Dashiell, Steven's County Commissioner
Tom Davis, Washington Farm Bureau
John, Jeff, Lisa Dawson and family
Gary Douvia, Steven's County resident
Dave Duncan, Washingtonians for Wildlife Conservation
Hans Dunshee, Legislative Representative
Tom Erskine, Washington Trails Association
Travis Fletcher, USFS
Mitch Friedman, Conservation Northwest
Diane Gallegos, Wolf Haven International
Dave Hedrick, Steven's County landowner, CNW board
Justin Hedrick, Steven's County Cattleman Association and livestock producer
Janey Howe, Steven's County schoolteacher
Denise Joines, Wilberforce Foundation
Sam Kayser, livestock producer
Jay Kehne, Conservation Northwest and Fish and Wildlife Commissioner
B.J. Kieffer, Spokane Tribe, DNR Director
Fred Koontz, Woodland Park Zoo
Joel Kretz, Legislative Representative
Ann Larson, WDFW
Rick, Roger, Russ Larsen and family/friends
Gretchen Lech, Hancock Natural Resources Group
Molly Linville, livestock producer
Kristine Lytton, Legislative Representative
Wendy and Nick Martinez, livestock producers
Donny Martorello, WDFW
Joey McCanna, WDFW
Bob McCoy, Mountain Lion Foundation
Wes McCart, Steven's County Commissioner
Len and Bill McIrvin, livestock producers

Dan McKinley, Mule Deer Foundation
Ruth Musgrove, Defenders of Wildlife Board member
Story Musgrove, Kids4Wolves
Carter Niemeyer, retired USFWS
Scott Nielson, livestock producer
Deanne Osterman, Kalispel Tribe, DNR
Nathan Pamplin, WDFW
Dan Paul, Humane Society of the US
Steve Pozzanghera, WDFW
Kirk Pearson, Senator
Mike Petersen, The Lands Council
Mark Pidgeon, Hunters Heritage Council
Kevin Ranker, Senator
Christine Rolfes, Senator
Stephanie Simek, WDFW
Jay Shepherd, WDFW
David Schuerman, livestock producer/hunting operation
Shelly Short, Legislative Representative
Brad Smith, Fish and Wildlife Commissioner
Dave and Melvin Smith, livestock producers
Lorna Smith, Western Wildlife Outreach
Lisa Stone, hunter
Paula Sweeden, Conservation Northwest
James Unsworth, WDFW
David Ware, WDFW
Sam Wasser, University of Washington
Miranda Wecker, Fish and Wildlife Commissioner
Amaroq Weiss, Center for Biological Diversity
Ted and Debbie Wishon and family
Anonymous stakeholders and decision-makers in the wolf conflict

The above individuals participated in in-depth interviews to assist in the overall conflict assessment. Additional connections and some brief conversations were had with several other key stakeholder and decision-makers, but the majority of these are considered by the author to be incomplete interviews, and hence are not listed above.

13. Discussion and Next Steps Recommendations

Deep-rooted conflict is typically characterized by participants' sense of hopelessness, negativity, polarization and intractability, deep distrust and prejudice. Washington's conflict is no exception.

In complex, deep-rooted conflicts, a third party neutral (TPN) conducts a comprehensive assessment of the social conflict dynamics before engaging stakeholders in a process of dialogue and decision-making. The assessment gives the TPN a sense of possible starting points for conflict transformation after gaining a more clear sense of what is driving the conflict socially, emotionally, physically, economically, relationally, historically and systemically. The starting point for engagement is just that: a start. The goal in providing these recommendations is not to be rigid or prescriptive, but rather to outline a general path that allows reconciliation of relationships and improvements to decision-making processes so that decisions can be made, supported and sustained.

Any plan for engagement needs to be responsive to the evolving needs, conditions and events within dynamic systems as much as it needs to deeply involve the key individuals and groups impacted by the conflict. It is ultimately the people involved in the conflict who are the innovators and leaders of collaborative, positive change. During the course of this assessment, most people were understandably not ready to figure out "what's next", as they needed and deserved the time to share and explore the past and current conflict before determining what a different future might include. As such, the recommendations below are intentionally general to ensure that plans are developed with and by individuals and groups, rather than for them.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Facilitate 1) relationship and trust building in WAG and between WAG and WDFW, 2) the restructuring of decision-making processes on WAG and with WDFW, and 3) dialogue and decision-making around issues of shared need and concern, including those identified by WDFW and the legislature.

WAG members, with input from their communities and constituents, will work together on all the above elements. This will require the willingness to engage in the building or strengthening of member capacity to understand and more durably address the social conflict that underpins and undermines effective decision-making around wolf recovery and management. The above section on "Perspectives on WAG" includes a list of issues, concerns and changes that provide a starting point. Capacity building of WAG members to analyze conflict and lead conflict transformation processes both on WAG and with their constituents will support their efforts to ensure their community's needs are sufficiently included, greater community support of WAG (and WDFW) efforts and decisions and will serve as a means to build greater buy-in and systemic support for wolf recovery and post-delisting wolf conservation and management.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Stakeholder group capacity building, planning and engagement for individual stakeholder groups: WDFW, environmentalists, livestock producers and hunters.

The representatives in WAG also need to be better integrated into a larger process of transformation that offers continual opportunities to connect needs, issues and feedback in constituent groups to the actions in WAG. Maintaining iterative processes that foster peace, support, progress and integrity throughout any process is critical.

Multi-stakeholder decision-making processes cannot rely on a single multi-stakeholder group (such as WAG) alone. The groups and communities that WAG members represent have great internal diversity – an essential source of creativity – and needs and thus as much as possible, these communities, groups and individuals could benefit from additional capacity to understand and address the drivers of conflict (which can be an opportunity for constructive change) both within their community and impacting their community. They would benefit from being empowered in decision-making that impacts their group. For any group, change is best derived and motivated from within, rather than imposed from outside. The feeling of imposition may perpetuate resistance to change and creates low-quality social cohesion in groups.

Deep-rooted conflict is typically characterized by low-quality social cohesion between and within groups where group resilience in the face of conflict is low and progress is typically slow, if at all. All groups interviewed have low-quality social cohesion, but to varying degrees. Low quality social cohesion typically means that diverse opinions or actions within a group are either not welcomed or are perceived as threatening to the function or survival of the group. The results may be either forced conformity or extensive fracturing. Why does this matter? Low-quality social cohesion can lead to an inability of the group to make decisions that will be to their long-term strategic advantage because groups are consumed with a need to defend and protect, rather than adapt and evolve. Additionally, low-quality social cohesion within groups actually fuels the external conflict between groups and this ultimately harms the originating group, as well as the overall system of stakeholders. Ultimately these conditions inhibit a systems ability to constructively function and they perpetuate the cycle of conflict.

Where needed, the same-side engagement may involve expanding the scope of engagement to have groups understand, address and engage on a broader suite of issues relevant for their group. Deep-rooted conflicts affect all the individuals and groups concerned, as well as society at large. There is typically a ripple effect of conflict throughout society that impacts effective decision-making capacity among other people, groups and on issues not immediately involved in or related to the conflict. The wolf conflict, for instance, impacts other fish, wildlife and natural resource conservation/management/use issues and other societal issues and needs,

such as the economy, education, environment and health. This decreased capacity for social function on a large scale impacts not just the issues of today, but creates the problems of tomorrow.

The outcome of a decision or set of decisions cannot leave one side a winner and the other a loser. One-sided wins will ultimately lead to a continued cycle of conflict where the group that is today's winner becomes tomorrow's loser and vice versa. By empowering groups to create a path for change themselves, they will be able to move from a defensive or defeatist position, to one where they can more effectively plan for their future, secure their way of life and reach their goals. This internal cohesion and strength will lead to a greater ability of groups to engage productively with stakeholders from other groups, including the government, to reach and mutually support shared goals.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Build opportunities to humanize individuals and groups, correct mischaracterizations in the public and media, as well as provide new opportunities for positive dialogue to counter current forums for negative discourse.

Changing a system in conflict requires that participants in the conflict engage in opportunities to acknowledge, respect and recognize the values, beliefs, and identities of "the other" – including the humanity of the "other". All sides benefit when engaged in opportunities to humanize one to another and (re)build trust. People cannot make broadly supported decisions with a person (or group or institution) they do not trust or see as less than human. Opportunities need to be created at multiple scales of interaction and engagement to build greater transparency, trust and communication. Opportunities may include social/news media, dialogue as shared work or play, stakeholder engagement in positive, common ground events and other occasions. This will include, at the beginning, WAG members, and will grow to include broader public engagement.

RECOMMENDATION #4: More deeply assess current WDFW structures and processes to determine where potential change is needed.

There is a natural human tendency to want to fit a current problem into an existing or familiar process, structure or set of solutions, rather than adapt structures and processes to the needs of reality. Typically the systems and capacities that created (or failed to transform) the current conflict need to be adapted in order to produce a new, different, and hopefully more constructive and sustainable result. Initial efforts will be focused on WAG and capacity building and planning in WDFW. Members/staff will explore where opportunities can be created or built upon and where obstacles can be overcome.

RECOMMENDATION #5: Continuing and periodic one-on-one and same-side engagement, support and strategic guidance by a TPN with individuals and groups

from all stakeholder groups and within the larger system to ensure integrity, support, mutual alignment and forward progress for all decision-making processes.

Continued engagement by a TPN ensures that there are ongoing opportunities to support the individuals and groups within this complex system. It ensures that dialogue and decision-making processes contain opportunities to share concerns and insights, explore, discuss and refine strategies and provide feedback and guidance around the process. While the ultimate goal is to positively change the system, one person cannot accomplish this alone. The diverse, knowledgeable and experienced individuals within the system are the foundational keys to innovation and positive change.

The recommendations presented in this document are designed to address the current reality and begin to chart a course toward a collectively desired future state. When building a house, one starts with the foundation, not the ceiling. These recommendations are designed to build a solid foundation for a more constructive, functioning system. This will take a collective act of courage, humility, empathy, determination and an open-minded willingness give time and energy to create something new, despite the fact that much of the current and past conditions, both here and in other wolf-inhabited states, point to a seemingly inevitable and hopeless cycle of destructive conflict.

What will this mean? It will mean that familiar orientations to “the other” and comfortable strategies to achieve a win for one group (that have been used as a means to an end for a very long time) will need to be explored and questioned. It will mean individuals, organizations and communities need to engage in processes that will help create new capacities and conditions where individuals, organizations and communities are willing to take a risk in creating a future that will look unlike neighboring states, unlike past or current conditions, and will aim to be a positive deviation from destructive past approaches.

A TPN will engage with both WAG and with individual stakeholder groups/communities, including WDFW and others, to determine how they would like to proceed. It is possible that some groups may be more willing to engage further or faster than others – this is the nature of system change.

A final note: All stakeholder groups (and specifically those interviewed as part of this assessment) need to assess for themselves whether they wish to give a TPN mandate and permission to engage with them through a set of conflict transformation processes. Anonymous feedback should be sought after the assessment and recommendations have been distributed.

Background on HWCC and the Third Party Neutral

Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration (HWCC)

The Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration (HWCC) transforms conflict to create sustainable solutions for people and wildlife. Our conservation conflict transformation (CCT) approach empowers people to make durable decisions that promote resilient human communities that better coexist with wildlife. HWCC's efforts consistently result in a reconciliation of the human conflicts that too often fracture communities and undermine wildlife conservation and management efforts to ensure that solutions are culturally, socially, ecologically, economically and politically robust and sustainable. HWCC is the only conservation-focused organization integrating CCT to support coexistence. CCT is the only conflict- or decision-making-oriented method specifically designed to comprehensively address the full complexity and depth of conflict in conservation contexts. CCT's theory and practice is derived from peacebuilding, a field developed to strengthen the capacity and institutions that support sustainable peace through conflict resolution efforts.

Since 2006, the Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration (HWCC) has worked with over 900 stakeholders and practitioners in wildlife conservation to integrate CCT best practices through facilitated interventions, capacity building and strategic guidance. By addressing the more elusive and deep-rooted social side of conflict through CCT, communities and decision-makers are more receptive to community and conservation goals, polarization of conflict decreases, shared common ground is identified and built upon, hostile relationships are transformed, and commitments to positive change are genuine and on-going. By creating these more constructive social conditions, efforts to address the more tangible evidence of the conflict, such as livestock depredation, poaching, and controversy over proposed management interventions – are more successful and sustainable.

Francine Madden, Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration (HWCC)

Francine Madden is the co-Founder and Executive Director of HWCC—a nonprofit organization integrating best practice standards in analyzing and transforming deep-rooted social conflict around wildlife-related issues. Recognizing the 'missing link' in conservation practice, Ms. Madden has pioneered efforts to integrate "conflict transformation" strategies from the peacebuilding field into the field of wildlife conservation and management through HWCC. Francine leads HWCC's Conservation Conflict Transformation (CCT) capacity building, conflict intervention, and strategic guidance work.

For nearly twenty years, Francine has worked behind the scenes to help people and projects build resilient and productive communities that support conservation, social justice and sustainable development; improve conservation outcomes for wildlife while ensuring the way of life for communities and diverse groups are secure and thriving; and improve government, community and conservation

relationships and decision-making on nearly every continent where people and wildlife exist.